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BOOK REVIEWS.

THE ELEMENTS OF ETHICS, by J. H. Muirhead, M.A. (University Extension Manuals. London: John Murray, 1892, pp. xi, 239), is, in several respects, a highly interesting volume. This is the first attempt made in this country to state in a popular way the main ethical doctrines of the English Idealists. The conviction has been gaining ground during recent years that this school of thinkers has something valuable to say on moral and religious questions: it is believed that, by a method which is not dogmatic, like that of the Intuitionists, it is able to reach results that are not barren, like those of the so-called Evolutionists and Agnostics. But, beyond the moral impressiveness of some of the leaders of this school, there has been very little of anything to sustain the growing faith of the public in it. To all except experts the "Prolegomena" of the late Professor Green is a book seven times sealed, while Mr. Bradley's "Ethical Studies" has been for years out of print, and Professor Caird's ethical views are buried in his commentaries. It was with the hope of placing these authors within reach of "the beginner in philosophy," together with the greater writers of whom they are exponents—"the perennial sources of ethical inspiration"—that Mr. Muirhead wrote his book. His hope has, in my opinion, been realized. His volume is an admirable introduction to the ethics of idealism, and has nearly all the qualities of a first-rate text-book. It is an accurate, clear, proportionate, and very complete record of the results achieved by this school of thinkers. These results are reached through a critical statement of rival theories, and supported by clear and telling arguments; and consequently this text-book cannot be easily put to an illegitimate use,—it cannot be learnt without being understood.

Mr. Muirhead's knowledge of the ancient and modern classics in his subject is manifestly accurate and mature. He has added to this theoretical knowledge a rarer qualification, viz., practical sympathy and direct contact with some of the profound and significant moral movements now taking place in our social life. On this account his remarks on the relation of the individual to the state are peculiarly interesting; and to this are partly due the simplicity and directness of his style, and the freshness and charm of his illustrations.

I shall not attempt to summarize the contents of the book, but merely indicate the general direction it takes. A science of morals is rendered necessary by the discrepancy which arises from time to time between the moral habits of man and the practical demands made upon him by his natural and social environment. And the science is possible: so that there is no need to seek the vain refuge of intuitionist or theological dogmatism. There are two main types of ethical theory,—one dominated by the idea of absolute law, the other by the idea of supreme end. The former, being abstract and foreign to the agent, is ultimately destructive of morality: whether the law be internal or external, it can produce no better results than prudent conduct, no higher motive than far-sighted selfishness. The latter, the conception of an end, yields a law which is at the same time absolute in its authority and a law of freedom; for the idea of an "end" is equivalent to self-realization. But the self to be realized may have for differ-

ent persons different meanings: the individual may identify his *self* with any one of its constitutive elements. The history of ethics illustrates this truth: the self to be realized has been alternately regarded as merely emotional or merely rational; hedonism has sought to subordinate reason to feeling, and the rival theory of "self-sacrifice"—cynicism, stoicism, Kantianism—has sought to do the reverse. Both theories are untrue: the former makes a moral law impossible; the latter makes it useless, for no one can obey it. And both theories are ultimately individualistic.

By means of a criticism of hedonism in its utilitarian form Mr. Muirhead arrives at his own view of the end as the "common good;" and by means of his criticism of evolutionary hedonism he emphasizes the fact that the common good is moral and not merely natural. "This supreme good may indifferently be described as the satisfaction (*i.e.*, realization) of the self as a whole (*i.e.*, the better self), or as the maintenance according to opportunities of the social system, which is only the other or objective side of this better self" (p. 195). This view of the common good combines the truth contained in the rival theories of hedonism and self-sacrifice, makes "dying to self" a moment in the realization of a higher good than is attainable by the direct self-affirmation of hedonism, and at the same time identifies the welfare of the individual with that of society.

Having arrived at the supreme good, the author proceeds to deduce its content,—that is, to show the moral aptitudes or virtues and the moral opportunities or duties which flow from it. He draws a table of the principal virtues and shows how each of them directly or indirectly implies the others. To this is added a discussion of moral progress,—perhaps the most suggestive in the book,—in which the standard is dealt with as Relative, Progressive, and Ideal.

Unless I over-estimate the need which both teachers and private students have long felt for such a manual as this, "The Elements of Ethics" will soon be in its second edition. I should, therefore, suggest in a tentative way a few points for the author's consideration.

It seems to me that the representation of the Kantian view of the relation of law to desire is not quite accurate. Kant holds that the moral law is capable of creating an *interest* in itself, and thereby of becoming a motive to action. And is the Stoic and Kantian type of ethical theory well characterized as the ethics of "self-sacrifice"? I believe that, while regarding the supreme good as the good of the self as a whole, the author should take more pains to justify the distinction he makes between lower and higher, better and worse, in that self. And are the two alternative definitions of the *summum bonum* adequate (see p. 195), or does the very choice imply the need of pressing beyond both to the principle which reconciles them? It seems to me that it would be difficult to derive practical rules, for guidance in the ordinary habits of life, either from the maxim "Act so as to realize thy self as a whole," or from its alternative, "Act so as to maintain the social system." Whereas, such a principle as that of Christian love is immediately applicable, not because feeling is better than reason, but because it indicates to the individual whether he has in his action assumed the attitude which identifies his own good with that of others. I think Mr. Muirhead should have made more explicit the principle which reconciles the individual and the

social good. It is possible, however, that to dwell upon the native universality of self-consciousness would have been beside the mark in an elementary textbook. But I am not sure that Mr. Muirhead has quite realized the significance of this truth. He speaks more than once as if consciousness *plus* impulse were of themselves adequate to constitute a moral agent, and does not point out with sufficient clearness how the former must transmute the latter. Consciousness might be conceived as a particular, existing by the side of other particulars. It is the same want of sufficient attention to the organizing or reconstitutive activity of a self, universal in its nature, which at times apparently leads the author to subordinate the individual to society (see p. 159), and to speak of him as if he were "only an instrument." On page 181 he even asserts that "self and society are related to one another as particular and universal, and are therefore only different sides of the one reality." There is one more point of minor importance which I should mention. The articulation, or, as the author calls it, "the ex-foliation of the good," seems to me to proceed quite empirically; and the classification of the virtues is the least valuable, and perhaps the least necessary, portion of a book which cannot easily receive too much praise.

HENRY JONES.

ST. ANDREWS.

EINLEITUNG IN DIE MORALWISSENSCHAFT. Eine Kritik der ethischen Grundbegriffe. Von Georg Simmel. In 2 Bänden. Erster Band, pp. viii, 467. Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1892.

The attitude of the author, who is *Privatdocent* at the University of Berlin, towards the present movement in the domain of ethics is pre-eminently a critical one. He is of the opinion that a dissolution is imminent and necessary of what has heretofore been comprised under the term "ethics." "If," he says in his preface, "moral science wishes to be elevated beyond the boundary existing between abstract imperatives and unmethodical or speculative reflections, . . . the time must come when a single book can no longer bear the title 'ethics' in the way that it might bear the title of 'physics.'" However, in spite of far-reaching differentiation, physics remains a distinct science, definitely separated from all other sciences, even though correlated to them, and I do not believe that the development of special knowledge sets aside but, on the contrary, decidedly increases the need of manuals and compendiums. In the same way, it is quite possible to conceive of a specialization within the field of ethics, which, as a matter of fact, has long since been begun to a certain degree. The task of explaining the ethical norms and rules of conduct that have been developed in the human race presupposes the investigator's familiarity with an extensive amount of material of the history of civilization and morality, and can in fact, as things are situated to-day, only be furthered through special research. In the same way the student of ethics, when he attempts to arrange the concrete circumstances of life according to ethical principles, will be brought into contact with the inexhaustible complexity of modern life and its problems, and he will find it necessary, in the consideration of individual ethics, but much more in the treatment of social ethics, to make himself acquainted with the result of historical, national, statistical, economic, and legal investigations. And there is no reason why the